

**"LET'S TALK ABOUT"**

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# AIDS





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**AIDS**



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**"LET'S TALK ABOUT"**

# **AIDS**

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**Gloucester Press**  
London · New York · Sydney







# **“Why is everyone talking about AIDS?”**

You have probably heard people talking about AIDS. You may have seen advertisements on television or in magazines and newspapers. When someone has AIDS, it means they are more likely to get illnesses. They can look well for a time but then get very ill. Medical researchers are working hard to find out more about AIDS so that they can find a cure.

At first no one knew about AIDS. Some people thought it had nothing to do with them. They wanted to believe that they wouldn't get it. A lot of people still don't know much about it. People often feel quite bewildered by things that they don't know much about. They often feel better when they find out more. One way you can find out more about AIDS is by reading this book.

You may have heard about AIDS when you were playing in the playground.



The diagram shows that for every person who has AIDS there are many more who have the HIV virus in their blood.





# “What is AIDS?”

AIDS is caused by a virus, which is a kind of germ. Viruses can be passed to anyone but *only* under certain conditions. Different viruses cause different infections. Many of the illnesses that you and everyone else have had have been caused by some kind of virus.

The virus that causes AIDS is called Human Immunodeficiency Virus. You can see why most people use the letters HIV for short. When people have HIV it means that the virus is in their blood. It will stay there for the rest of their lives. The virus can stay in the blood for a long time without doing any harm. After some time, though, it may start to kill some of the cells in the blood which help you to keep healthy. When this happens the person has AIDS.

Luckily HIV is a weak virus, which means it cannot live outside the body. This means it is *very* difficult to pass from person to person.







# **“What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?”**

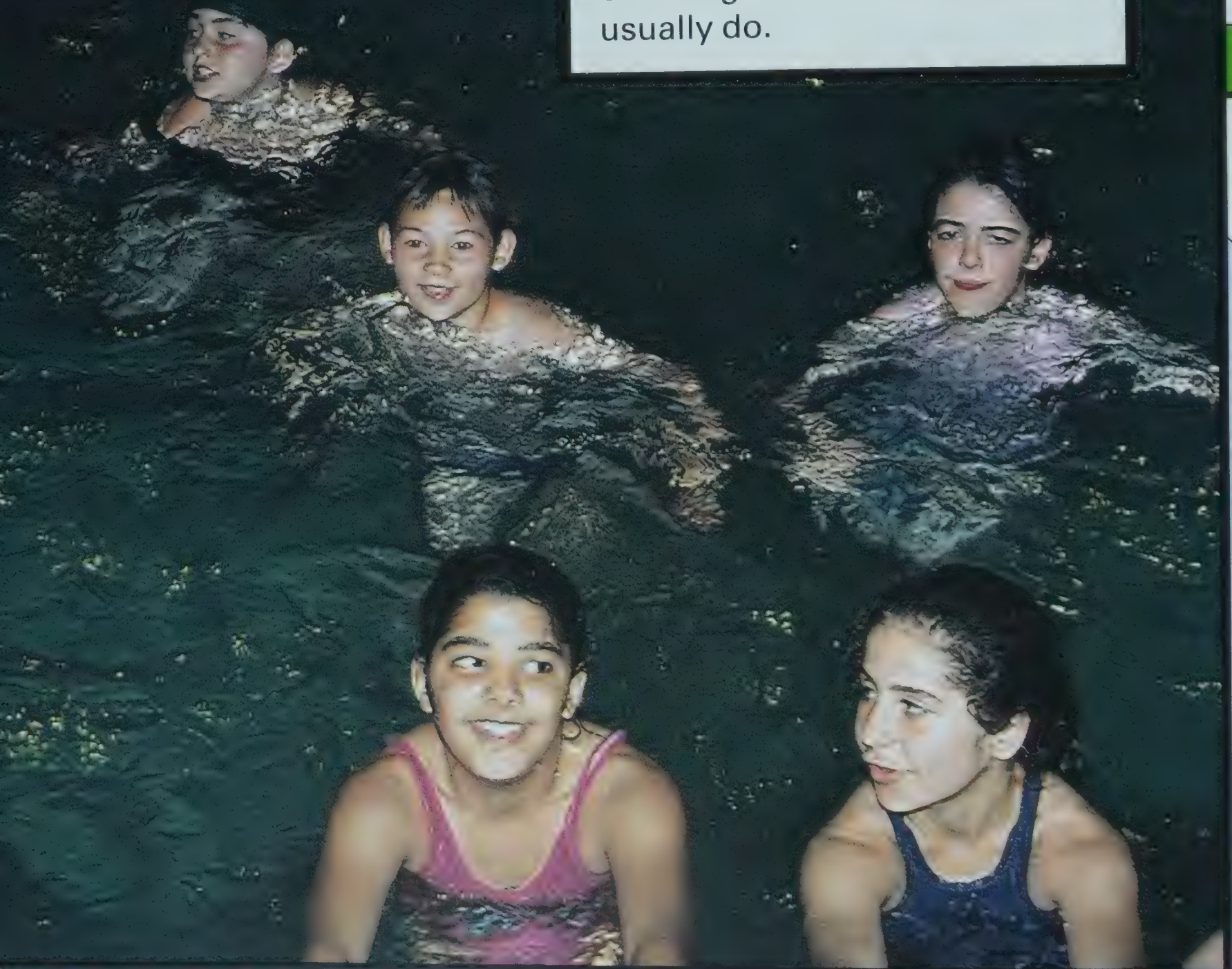
The word AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome. AIDS means the illnesses which some people may get when they are infected with HIV. You might get confused about the difference between people with HIV and those with AIDS. The difference is that people with AIDS are people who have started to get ill. People don't have the virus in the first place. They acquire it.

HIV can only be acquired in certain ways. At first we didn't know what those ways were. Now we do. Once someone is infected with HIV, the virus can start to kill the special cells in their blood which help the body to stay well. Then the body cannot cope with other illnesses and infections. This means that a person with AIDS can get very sick or even die.

Everyone needs to know that if people do certain things, they are less likely to be infected by HIV.



AIDS doesn't mean you can't  
have fun together. You can go  
on doing most of the things you  
usually do.





# **“Could I get the virus?”**

When people became aware of AIDS they were very worried about getting it themselves. We now know that it is very difficult for the virus to go from one person to another. Once you know how the virus goes from person to person, you will understand how you can protect yourself.

You can't get the virus by standing next to someone because HIV doesn't travel through the air. You can't get infected from sharing cups, plates and other things. You can sit on a toilet seat without worrying about getting it. You can go on doing most of things you usually do, when you have fun with your friends. You can go on hugging or kissing people, shaking hands and sharing what you eat and drink.

You can't get infected from swimming pools. There is no need to worry if you are bitten by insects such as mosquitoes. HIV cannot get inside your body from any of these things.



# **“So how does HIV pass from person to person?”**

Different kinds of virus are spread from person to person in different ways. As you know, some viruses spread through the air. Others have to go directly from one person to another, and even have to get right into your bloodstream before they can affect you. HIV is one of these.

Blood travels around your body and helps you keep healthy. It's hard for things to get into your blood and there are many ways of protecting yourself. Remember the virus cannot live outside the body for more than a few seconds. When you cut yourself blood comes out, and it's hard for anything to get in. A scab forms on the skin. Keeping a cut covered is one way to look after yourself.

Your blood works hard to keep you well. Putting a plaster on a cut will help it.







Needles can be used in different ways. Sometimes a little bit of blood is taken out of our bodies to make sure it's OK.





# **“Are there many ways HIV can get into the bloodstream?”**

There are very few ways the virus can get into the bloodstream. Knowing what these ways are helps you to understand how to look after yourself.

One of the things you may already have heard is that AIDS has something to do with some kinds of drugs. In fact, most drugs don't have anything to do with AIDS. Some drugs are medicines and are given to us by doctors or chemists to help us to get better. You have probably swallowed medicines or pills, and most of us have had injections with needles.

Sometimes injections are used to put drugs into the bloodstream. When this is done a drop of blood may end up in the needle or syringe. That's why when people give injections they are *very* careful. They make sure the needle is clean, and hasn't been used by anybody else. If they didn't do this, somebody else's blood might get into your bloodstream.



# **“What does AIDS have to do with drugs?”**

When people take drugs, they need to remember to follow the doctors' instructions. But some people take drugs that are not prescribed to them by a doctor. They may be taking great risks with their health and doing something illegal.

Some people use needles to inject drugs directly into their bloodstream. They may use a needle which has been used by someone else and some of this person's blood then may get inside them. If the other person has HIV then the virus will pass into their body. It's never a good idea to pick up and play with anything you see lying around, particularly syringes or needles. Leaving them alone is another way you can look after yourself.

Learning about HIV helps you to understand how it can be passed from one person to another.





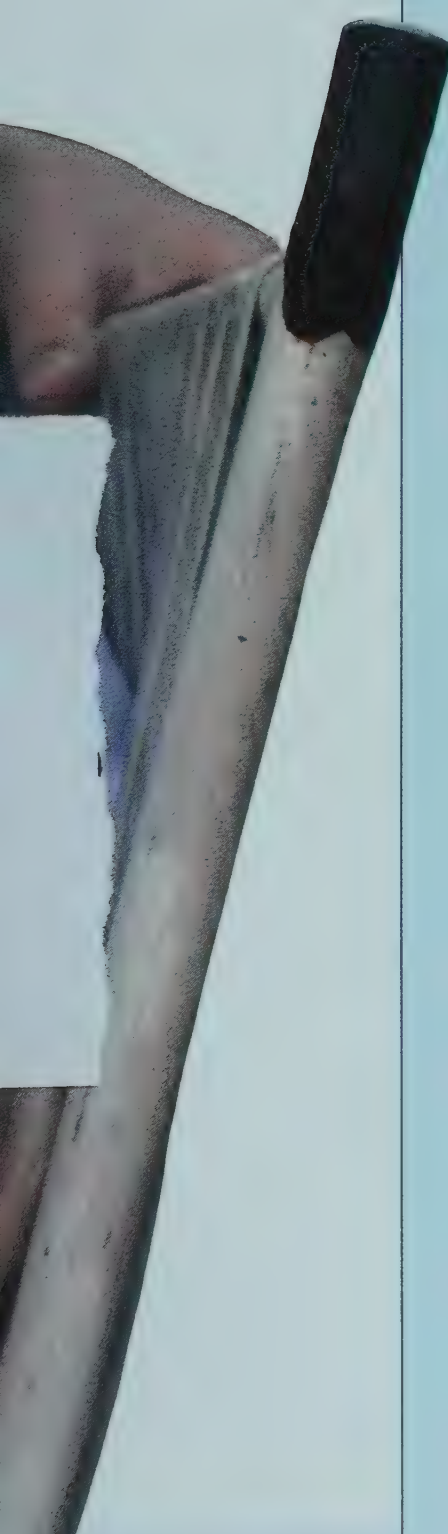


Very little of the virus gets into the fluids like saliva and tears. Since it's so weak, we don't have to worry.





# **“How else can I look after myself?”**



There are other ways the virus can get into the bloodstream. There are lots of ways you can look after yourself and protect yourself from it. In order to understand them, you need to know more about how bodies work.

You may not have thought about it but there are lots of different fluids in your body. We don't have to worry about most of these, but we do have to be careful about some fluids.

As we grow we start to produce special body fluids. As their bodies change, girls start to produce a fluid which helps keep the vagina clean. They also start to menstruate, or have periods. This is when a small amount of blood comes out of the vagina. Boys produce sperm which are found in a fluid called semen. Semen can come out of the body through the penis. If HIV gets into the blood, it gets into vaginal fluids, menstrual blood and semen.



# **“How can these body fluids go from one person to another?”**

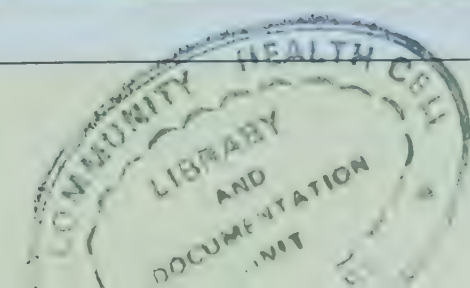
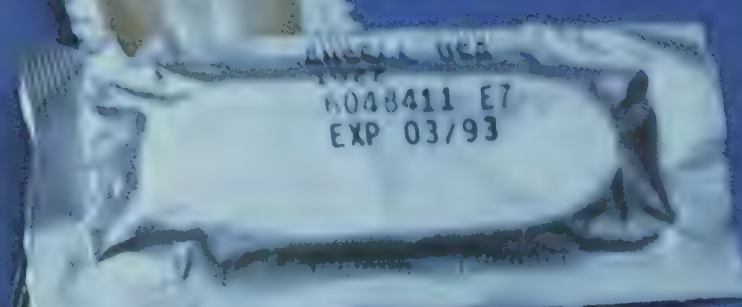
We all have strong feelings sometimes. When people have strong sexual feelings, they may decide to show them. One way they can do this is by making love or having sex. This is one time that semen or vaginal fluid may get inside another person, and if HIV is in these fluids, it can be passed on.

There are lots of ways of expressing sexual feelings. Most of them, like touching and hugging, don't make it easy for body fluids to get inside another person.

One way that may help to stop fluids from being passed on is to use a condom on the penis when having sex. Condoms have been used for a long time to stop women getting pregnant.

If used correctly condoms can help stop body fluids getting inside another person.





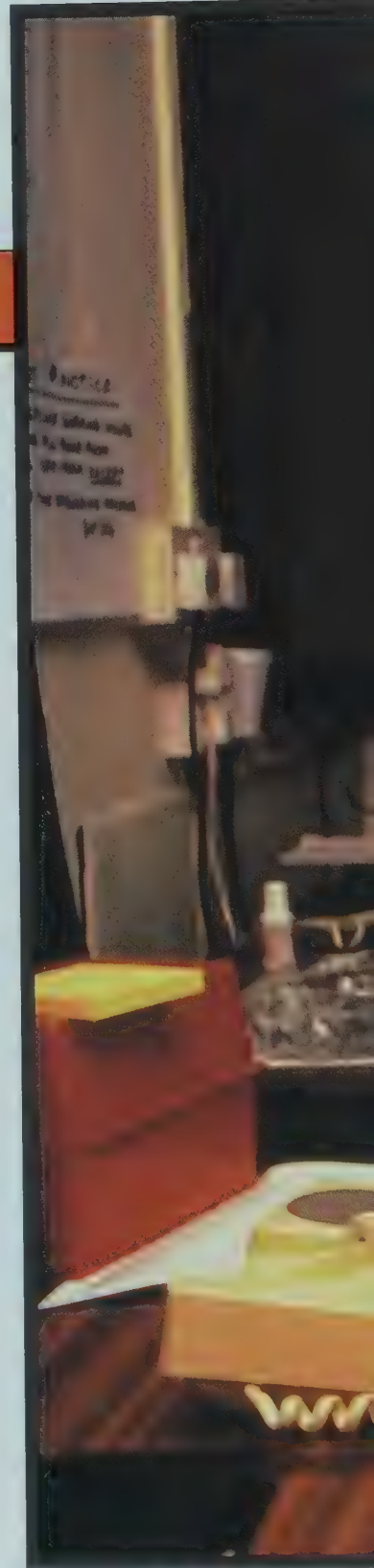


# **“Are there any other ways HIV can get into our bodies?”**

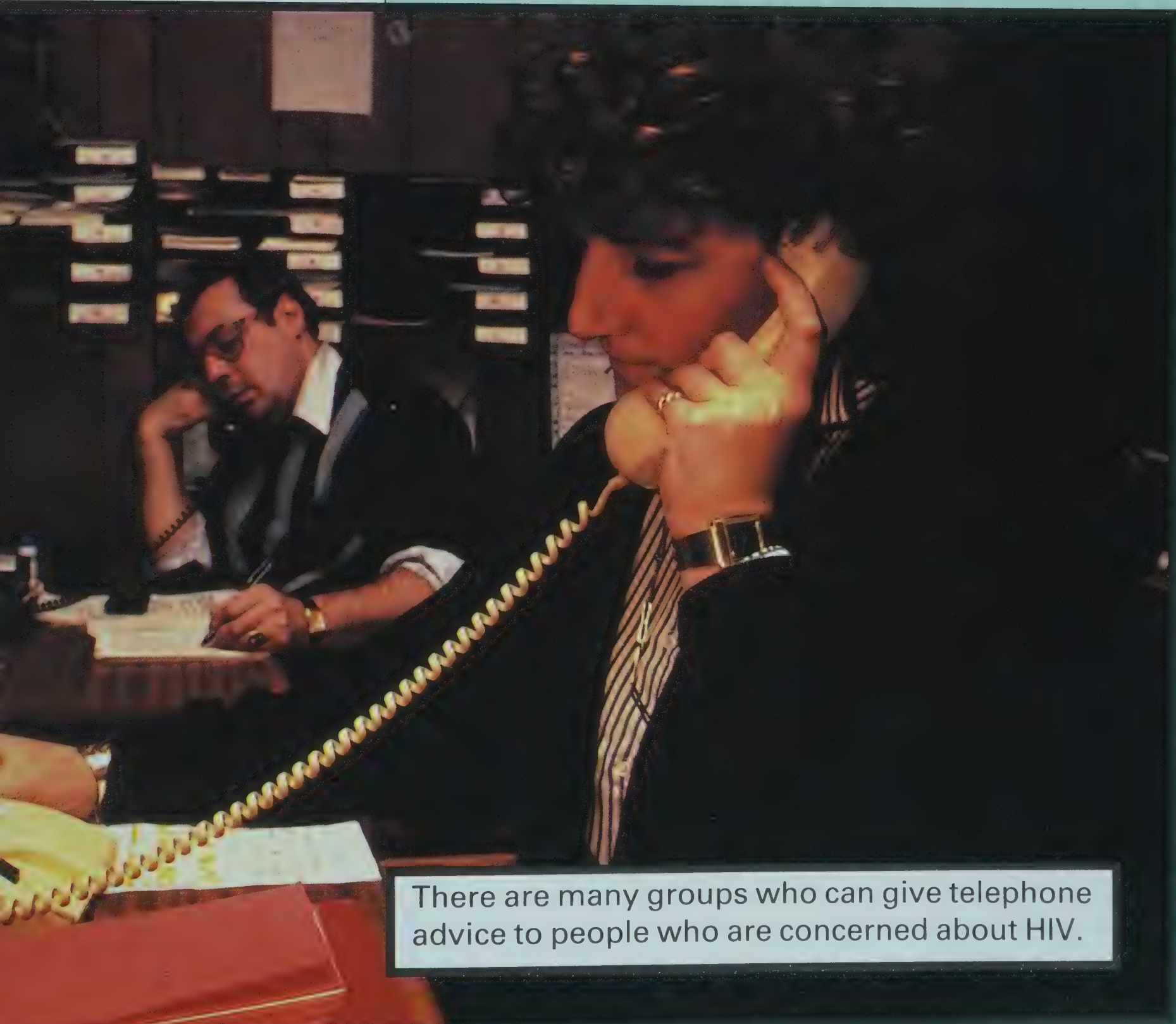
Another way the virus can get into the bloodstream is when a baby is growing inside a mother who has HIV. After all, a mother shares her blood with her baby. Some babies whose mothers are infected with HIV may be born with the virus in their bloodstream, others may not. Those that do become infected may carry the virus in their blood for a long time before they get AIDS, just like other people.

It is possible for the virus to get into the body through the mouth. This is very unlikely. Kissing each other on the mouth is certainly fine.

Remember it's difficult for HIV to get into your bloodstream. If someone you know has it, you shouldn't be afraid. You can play together just like you would with your other friends. When someone has HIV or AIDS, they can feel very much on their own and they may welcome your friendship.








There are many groups who can give telephone advice to people who are concerned about HIV.









# **“What is being done to help people with AIDS?”**

We all need lots of care and support, particularly when we're ill. People with AIDS can get help in a variety of ways. Some need to be in hospitals. Others are well enough to live at home. It can take a long time for someone with HIV to develop AIDS, and people with AIDS can live for a very long time. Some have formed groups to help each other. Some take special care of themselves. It is likely that they will also need lots of help from their families and friends.

Knowing you are going to die may be very frightening, but it may also help people to live in ways they never have before. People who are ill often value their lives, and enjoy being able to give and receive love from other people.

All kinds of people are trying to find different ways to help people who become ill with AIDS.



# **“What is being done about HIV and AIDS?”**

A lot of people still feel they don't understand the virus and are frightened about it. If everyone knew about HIV and how to protect themselves from it, then they might be less worried.

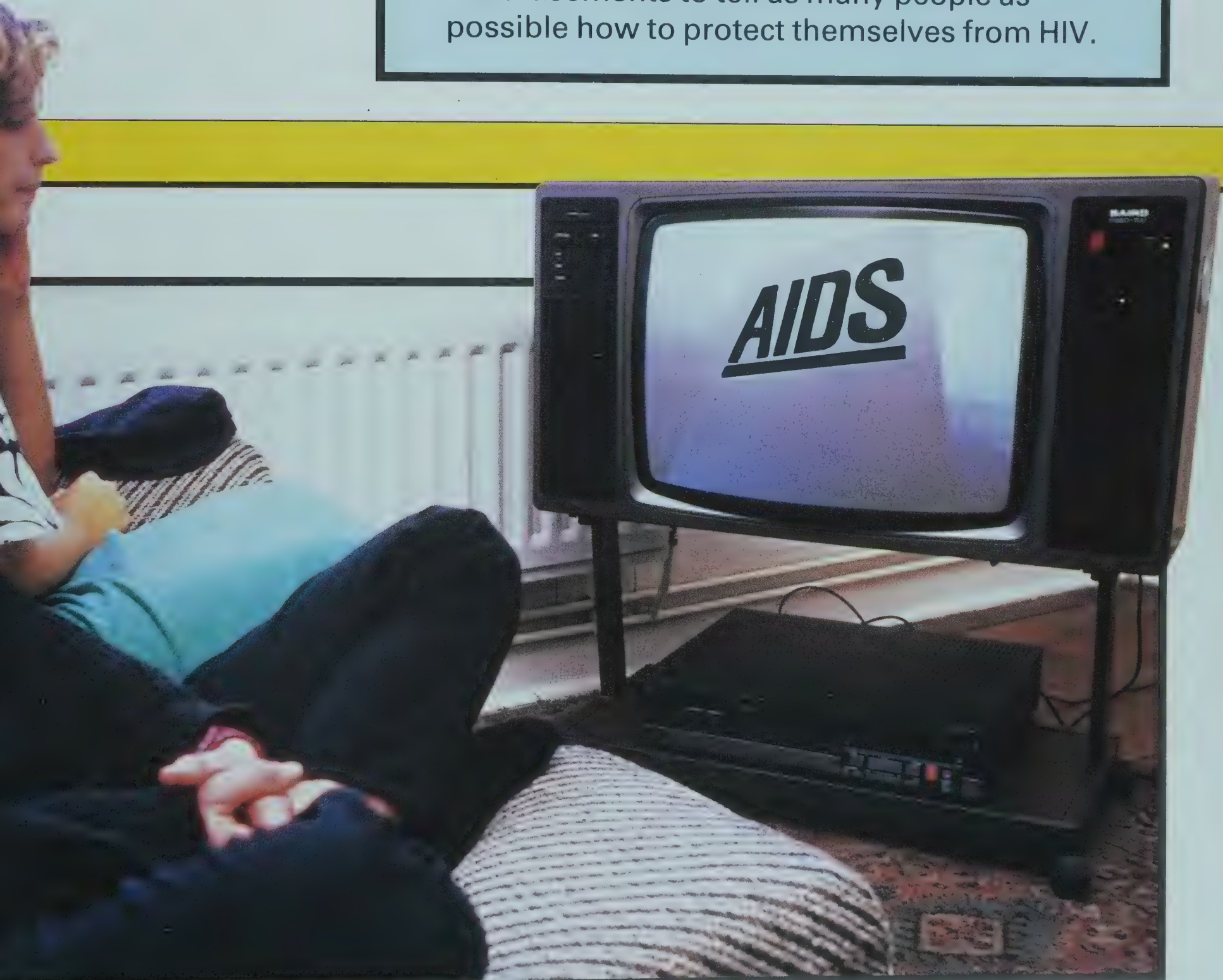
Some governments are trying to tell people about HIV and AIDS through advertisements in newspapers, magazines and on television. Some people are being given special training to teach people about HIV and AIDS, or to look after people who have the virus. Hospital workers have been trained to take blood tests and give injections properly. More and more people are beginning to understand what we need to do to protect ourselves.

HIV has been found all over the world. Governments are now putting more money into research and the World Health Organization is collecting information about AIDS from many different countries. A World AIDS Foundation has also been set up.



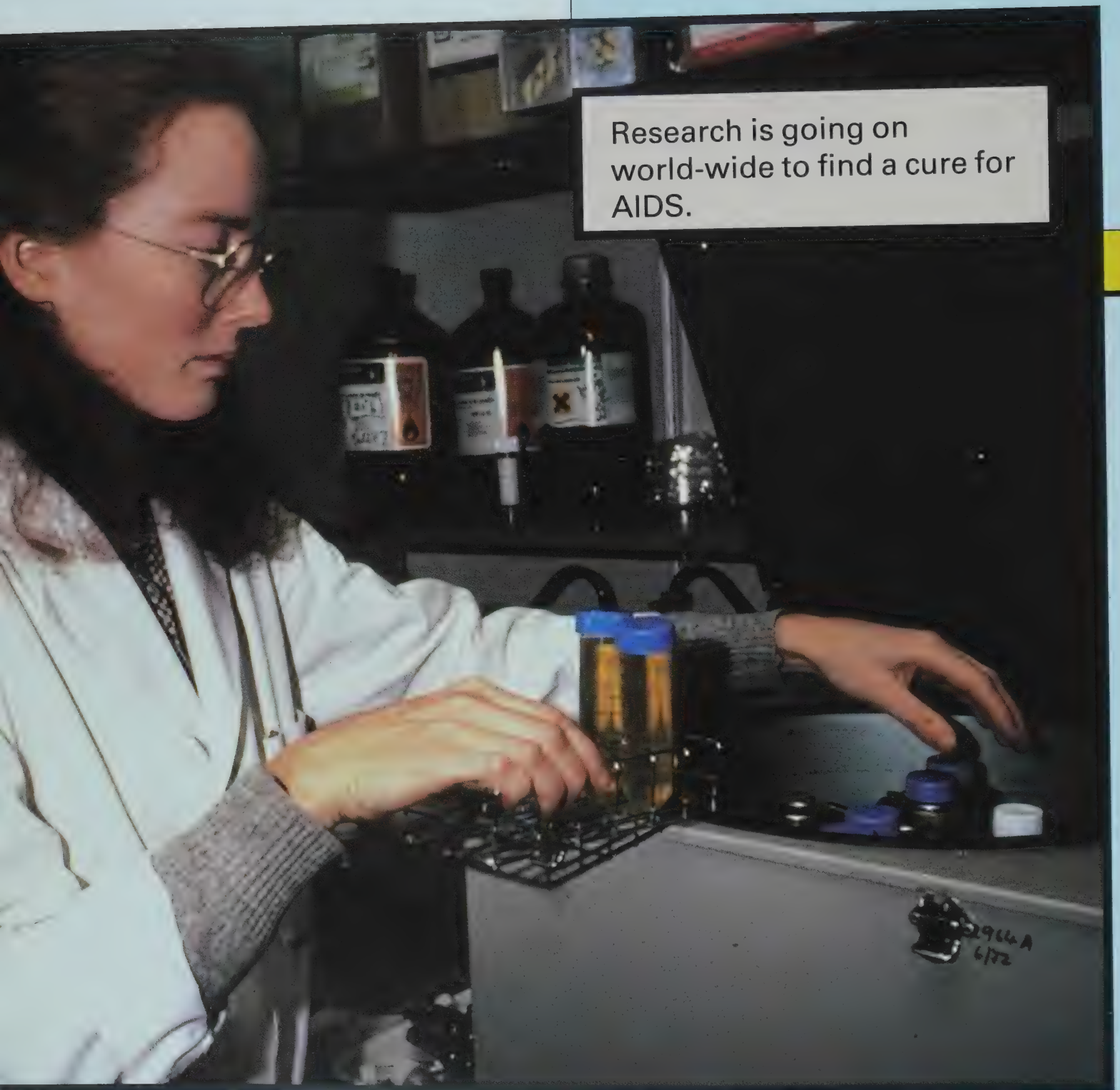


The government has produced television advertisements to tell as many people as possible how to protect themselves from HIV.





Research is going on  
world-wide to find a cure for  
AIDS.





# **“Will there be a cure for AIDS?”**

Medical researchers are trying to find out more about HIV and AIDS but it may be a long time before a cure is found. There are many viruses which can lead to death. Researchers have been able to find cures or vaccines for some of these by studying them. A vaccine works by giving you a small amount of a germ or virus and letting your body cope with it. Then your body is protected against the same germ or virus in the future.

Researchers are trying to make a vaccine to protect people from HIV, but it will take some time to develop. They are also looking for drugs to help people who already have the virus to stay well. Already they have found a drug which stops the virus from spreading round the body so quickly, and helps people with AIDS to live longer. They are working hard to understand how these new drugs work, so that they can use them safely to help people.



# “What can I do?”

Other people may not know as much about HIV and AIDS as you do. The more everyone knows about AIDS, the less frightened they will be. You might think that other people you know behave in ways which can pass HIV from person to person. If so, it may help to talk to someone you can trust about it. We all have the right to look after ourselves.

When you have been frightened by something or somebody, you may have tried to avoid whatever it is. Some people try to keep clear of people they think have the virus. They even blame them. But *you* know there is no need for this. It is important to treat everybody in the way you would like to be treated yourself.

Now that you have read this book you will know that it is very difficult to catch the virus from someone else. Nearly all the things we do together are safe. You can go on touching each other, sharing things and having fun together.



# What the words mean

**AIDS** This stands for Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome. It is a collection of illnesses.

**blood** It travels all around the body from the heart. It carries the things the body needs like oxygen and food.

**drug** A drug is anything you put into your body, other than food, that changes the way your body works and makes you feel different.

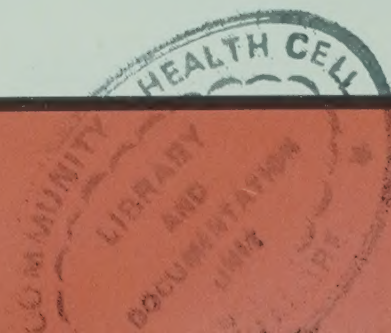
**HIV** This stands for Human Immuno-deficiency Virus. It is a virus that lives in some of the cells in the blood. If it kills these cells, this can lead to AIDS.

**syndrome** This is a collection of illnesses caused by the same thing.

**syringe** This is a container attached to a hollow needle, used for injecting drugs into the bloodstream or taking blood for a sample.

**virus** A virus is a kind of germ. Bacteria and funguses are also kinds of germs. They cause different kinds of illnesses.

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